

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-12 /104 W
-----015521 271318Z /53

R 271201Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6193
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 7972

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, SY, MO, AG, MR
SUBJECT: EVOLUTION OF SYRIA'S ATTITUDE TOWARD MAGHREB AND THE
POLISARIO

1. SINCE THE TRIPOLI SUMMIT THERE HAS BEEN A SHIFT IN SYRIA'S
POLITICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD GREATER SUPPORT FOR ALGERIA AND THE
POLISARIO MOVEMENT AND CORRESPONDING COOLING TOWARD MOROCCO
AND MAURITANIA. ALGERIA HAS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED THIS
DIRECTION; MOROCCO HAS SOUGHT TO COUNTER IT. SOME
EMBARRASSMENT HAS RESULTED AS SYRIA HAS TRIED NOT TO DISPLEASE
ANY PARTY.

2. DURING PAST WEEK ALGERIAN CHARGE RECEIVED FROM FOREIGN
MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF ARAB AFFAIRS QUTUB AN EXPRESSION OF
SYRIAN UNDERSTANDING FOR ALGERIAN POSITION ON SAHARAN QUESTION
AND PARTICULARLY ON FRENCH HANDLING OF POLISARIO WHICH
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HE PROMPTLY CHARACTERIZED IN PRESS STATEMENT TO AGENCE
FRANCE PRESSE AS STRONG SYRIAN SUPPORT FOR ALGERIA.
FOLLOWING DAY MFA DIRECTOR OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
JOUAYJATI EXPLAINED TO FRENCH EMBASSY THAT SYRIA DID NOT
MEAN TO TAKE SIDES AND WAS MERELY CONCERNED TO PREVENT
DIVISIONS IN ARAB UNITY AND DISPUTES AMONG FRIENDS.

3. EARLIER IN DECEMBER PRESIDENT ASSAD HAD POINTEDLY BEEN ILL AND UNAVAILABLE TO MOROCCAN ENVOY BEN SOUDA WHO HAD BEEN SENT AS FOLLOW UP TO BOUCETTA/DLIMI MISSION BY HASSAN. BEN SOUDA, ACCORDING MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR, WISHED TO DISCUSS CURRENT SAHARAN DEVELOPMENTS AS WELL AS TO EMPHASIZE KING'S ADVICE THAT ARAB LEADERS GIVE SADAT TIME TO SEE WHAT HE COULD DEVELOP FROM HIS POLITICAL INITIATIVES TO THE ISRAELIS.

4. AS FOR MAURITANIA, QUTUB CONVOKED MAURITANIAN AMBASSADOR OULD DADDAH LAST WEEK TO PROTEST A REPORTED FILM SHOWING IN NOUAKCHOTT IN WHICH PRESIDENT ASSAD WAS DEPICTED BEING DRAWN INTO MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS ON A LEASH PULLED BY DAYAN. QUTUB DEMANDED OFFICIAL EXPLANATION WITHIN 24 HOURS. OULD DADDAH EXPLAINED TO MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR A DAY OR SO LATER THAT HE HAD NOT EVEN BEEN ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH NOUAKCHOTT IN THIS TIME FRAME LET ALONE RECEIVE EXPLANATION FOR THIS BIZARRE INCIDENT, WHICH HE ASSUMED MUST HAVE BEEN SOME SORT OF IRAQI FILM THAT THE MAURITANIANS HAD NOT THOUGHT TO CENSOR.

5. COMMENT: DESPITE DISCERNABLE SHIFT TOWARD ALGERIA SINCE TRIPOLI SUMMIT, SYRIANS ARE STILL AFFECTED BY FACT THAT MOROCCANS FOUGHT AT THEIR SIDE IN 1973. THERE HAS BEEN NO COVERAGE OF SAHARAN EVENTS IN LOCAL PRESS AND IT SEEMS THAT SYRIA HAS SOUGHT TO KEEP FROM BEING DRAWN INTO SAHARAN DISPUTE IN ANY ACTIVE WAY.
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MURPHY

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